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RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY 7272  
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 5509  
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY 3589  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 0397  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 0420  
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO PRIORITY 0005  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEAHLA/HOMELAND SECURITY CENTER WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 0612  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0371

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DAMASCUS 000225

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DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ELA, NEA/I, PRM/ANE  
NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH/GAVITO

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/03/2018

TAGS: [PREF PHUM PREL SY IZ](#)

SUBJECT: IRAQI PALESTINIAN REFUGEES DEPART FOR CHILE - MANY  
LEFT IN "DEPLORABLE" CONDITIONS

REF: 2007 DAMASCUS 072

Classified By: Charge D'Affairs Michael Corbin for reasons 1.4 b/d

1. (U) Summary: On April 2, UNHCR Syria representatives informed PolOff that 38 Iraqi Palestinian refugees will be departing Syria for Chile on April 5 for final resettlement. According to UNHCR representatives and Chilean Embassy contacts, all 116 Iraqi Palestinians chosen for resettlement from the Al-Tanf refugee camp (reftel) will arrive in Santiago by month's end. The Chilean government, hoping for a smooth assimilation of the Iraqis into Chilean society, has set in motion numerous social and medical programs to assist the refugees with the transition the moment they arrive in Santiago. End Summary.

2. (U) Arturo Giadala, Deputy Head of the Chilean Mission, confirmed, on April 3, UNHCR reports (received on April 2) that 116 Iraqi Palestinians were being prepared for imminent departure and provided additional details on their resettlement from Syria in Chile. Arturo explained that the first batch of refugees (38 individuals) will depart Damascus, via commercial air (Air France - layover in Paris, France), on April 5. He went on to add that the remaining Iraqi Palestinians will be divided into two groups and depart April 20 and April 27 respectively, both via commercial air (Iberia Air - layover in Madrid, Spain). Arturo reported that he had personally traveled to the Al-Tanf camp to verify refugee names/faces against identification cards before he disbursed refugee travel documents. Additionally, the Chilean Ministry of Interior had conducted appropriate background checks and cleared the individuals for settlement in Chile. Arturo noted that there were many smiling faces, "at least 116 of them," juxtaposed against the backdrop of one of the most "miserable" refugee camps he had ever visited. He pointed out that there are at least 600 additional refugees who will continue to live in the "deplorable" conditions of Al-Tanf, and "wished" other countries would intervene and assist these Iraqis. (Note: The SARG itself has been an obstacle to the resettlement of these Palestinian Iraqis, demanding that they be resettled in Arab countries only. End Note)

3. (U) According to Arturo, the three groups of refugees

would be dispatched to three separate locations in Chile: Santiago, San Felipe and Latakia. He explained those refugees with medical conditions or severe disabilities will be resettled in Santiago, so that they can be close to advanced medical facilities. The healthy remaining refugees would be dispersed to San Felipe and Latakia because of the large Palestinian populations in the two cities. The Chilean government has planned extensively for the group's arrival, Arturo said. Refugees will be allowed to choose schools for their children, receive prepared identity cards upon arrival, be provided housing and benefit from a job placement program commensurate with applicable job skills.

¶4. (C) Arturo expressed hope that the refugees would integrate into the Chilean population without difficulty. He noted that besides Chile, other countries in the region including Venezuela, Argentina, Guatemala and Honduras, would evaluate the progress of this trial group of Iraqi Palestinians refugees before committing to resettle additional numbers from the Al-Tanf refugee camp. As in previous discussions, Arturo said his country is concerned, given that all the Palestinians are Muslim, there might be some discord in the course of integrating the group into a predominately Christian society.

¶5. (C) Comment: The SARG's willingness to facilitate the resettlement of the Palestinians to Chile, despite Syria's strongly held pan-Arabist and pro-Palestinian positions, reflects the SARG's changing position on the resettlement of Palestinians. Key to the deal was the acquiescence of Palestinian groups to allowing the Iraqi Palestinian to move to a non-Arab country. The SARG remains vulnerable to potential criticism on this pan-Arab issue as the

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resettlement proceeds. How the SARG weathers this process will likely have an impact on its willingness to facilitate resettlement of all vulnerable Iraqi refugees.

CORBIN